

How Do You Talk to Your Parent About Their Drinking?

You need to know three things before we start.

1. You didn't cause the problem
2. You can't cure the problem BUT...
3. *You can take care of yourself!*

No one can force someone to change. We cannot make them quit drinking, using drugs, or even use less. We can't make them get help. We do, however, have a right to our thoughts and feelings. We can bring to their attention the fact that their using is a problem *for us*.

If you are concerned that your parent may have a problem with drinking or drugs, you might be scared to bring it up. You have probably watched relatives avoid the subject or whisper about it to each other. You might think they will become angry, yell, blame, embarrass you, move out, or even use more or more secretly. Lots of us have had the same experience, thoughts and feelings. You need to know that ignoring it doesn't make it better and that by talking about it, it does change sometimes. We just never know when the change might occur. Yours might be the first conversation like this and they may not listen. On the other hand we never know when someone is ready to listen and change. Badgering doesn't help, nagging doesn't help. Yelling doesn't help. Love does.

Here are some tips to having a hard conversation with someone you love about a problem that concerns you:

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Tips to Talk About the Families Problem

If you are genuinely concerned about an angry or violent reaction, it is best to not have the conversation alone. Always have someone with you. Remember that the point of the conversation is not to convince them that they have a problem, but to let them know that you are concerned and how you feel.

- * Don't have the conversation when your parent is intoxicated or angry.
- * Don't initiate the conversation when you are angry.
- * Start the conversation by saying that you're doing it because you care about them. "You know I love you"
- * Continually emphasize that you're having this conversation because you're concerned about their well-being.
- * "I am concerned by how much you are drinking. I have noticed that your behavior has been different. I'm scared for you."
- * List behaviors and incidents that you've observed and why they concern and affect you. Discuss how their behaviors have impacted you and how that has hurt you.
- * Make sure the discussion is a two-way conversation so that they don't feel cornered or get defensive. A good way to do this is to ask open-ended questions.
- * Keep on the main point. Don't get sidetracked with speculation, judgment, or an explanation for why.
- * If the person denies there is a problem, try to get them to agree to have another conversation in the future.
- * Talk to another adult you trust. *You are not alone!*

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